

Cocoon

empowering our children



Parenting

booklet



A collaborative booklet full of resources and guidance
written by local families and organisations

It is a pleasure to share with all of you our collectively written parenting booklet which has been supported and funded by NCIL (The Neighbourhood Community Infrastructure Levy).

After producing 2 previous editions, we wanted to embark on a journey of working closely with some of our families and local partners in the borough.

Our aims were:

- Working collectively
- Feeling proud of a collective effort
- Developing and strengthening communications skills
- Contributing to a sense of belonging
- Consolidating our presence in the community by pursuing community-led ideas

As on every journey, we have had some enriching learning opportunities, including ups and downs with our deadlines and expectations. However, as an organisation we were keen to embrace the unknown and we knew somehow that it was going to be new territory. Luckily, we came across some positive and willing parents and organisations, who connected with the idea and were able to deliver some valuable contributions.

For our project we identified some steps and milestones to follow. Briefly, we advertised the project with a callout poster; provided creative writing workshops both online and face to face; kept up individual communication with each contributor; edited the articles; sent them for proofreading; did the design and finally the file went for printing.

The outcome is what you are holding in your hands right now. A compilation of ideas that come from insights and experiences from parents and from those who work supporting families in our community.



Illustrations & layout:
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We'd like to point out that any views, thoughts, and opinions expressed by the contributors are their own and do not necessarily reflect the views, opinions, policies, or position of Cocoon.

We are very grateful and pleased with this achievement because it has given us more confidence as an organisation about how we can involve others and work together towards a shared aim.

Natalia Lema

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**Barking &
Dagenham**

Participants' feedback

It means so much to write for this booklet and be part of this project! As a new parent in the pandemic I really desired a space to engage with other parents and learn. I hope this booklet will be invaluable to many! - Zainab



It meant a lot to me that I was able to contribute to this parenting booklet, having read the previous one I was happy to be able to share my knowledge and experiences in the hope it will help other parents like me. - Michelle

What an amazing experience to take part in a collective parenting booklet. We parents often have similar questions and to be able to share thoughts and tips on parenting is so helpful. - Irina

I'm very proud to take part in the project and hope it will be a huge success and help for the families. - Jolanta

I felt a great sense of achievement and satisfaction by contributing and being part of this project. The mothers appreciated the discussions around understanding children's behaviour and learning new strategies. I felt I had empowered them with the appropriate tools to deal with confidence next time they had to deal with a tantrum. It is great to be able to help and support parents with another tool in their bag to deal with child development appropriately. - Shaistah

It was a great pleasure to take part in a local initiative and share my knowledge and experience. I am grateful for having a chance to spread the little seeds for growth and inspiration. - Yulia

I am happy to be given the opportunity to pass on some of my experience as a parent and as a music therapist to other parents and help them on their parenthood journey. - Matina

Thank you for providing me with an amazing platform to pen down the emotions of being a mother. - Aisha

Contributing to this project gave me some time to reflect on what it has meant to me to become a parent, look after my child and see how they've grown and developed. Amidst all the business of life with a small child, this moment just to think about what's been most important about that journey so far was really valuable. - Niamh

As a participant in this project, I derived much pleasure in sharing my knowledge with families in this booklet. Personally, I would like to congratulate Cocoon for their passion in educating children. Indeed, they have been metamorphosing children from different cocoons by giving them guided confidence to fly. - Tosin





Every child is different

Every child is unique in every aspect of life and this realisation is essential for parents and those working in childcare.

Early age

At each age, every child has their own natural responses to their new life e.g. some newborns are very good sleepers, while some are colic babies (without any serious health conditions). You're not spoiling your baby by cuddling them or holding them to help them sleep throughout the night. That tiny human being needs us day and night unless you're so fortunate that your baby just sleeps in the early months.

Growth

All children have their own growth rate. We should never compare any child with another. If your child is a little ahead or little behind at a certain age it is completely normal, as your child will reach the milestones sooner or later.

Learning & development

All children develop at their own pace and in their own way. It is normal for children to experience development spurts and slow spots in different areas of their development over time, whether it's Social, Speech & Language or Educational. So please don't rush and avoid making any kind of comparison.

Motivation

Motivate and encourage your children. Focus on their interests and support them. Share your enthusiasm for learning.

Being a parent

Being a parent is already a very hard and responsible job, so we shouldn't stress ourselves out. Our children can sense us in every way, especially anxiety about milestones, so it's good to create an environment which is helpful for both parents and children. And very importantly, never ever make other parents feel bad about anything related to their children. We should rather support each other being a parent in every possible way.

Criticism

Don't criticize your children or someone else's children. This is the worst thing you can do to a child or a parent. Also remember that no one needs unnecessary advice from you.

Bonding with your child

There are many ways of building this special connection. Our favourite ways are through:

Books

- Read to your child every day.
- Look at the pictures together and talk about what you see.
- Have a special reading time that suits your family.

Nature

- Spend time outdoors, visit your local parks and playgrounds.
- Teach skills with nature: maths (count sticks, stones and flowers), literacy (write a letter on the sand), phonics (find 5 objects starting with the same sound)
- Listen to the sounds of the wind, the silence, the birds singing and your own breathing.
- Make a collage from fallen leaves, sticks and stones.

Art

- Visit museums and galleries, and talk about what you see.
- Observe and draw what you see.
- Have a special craft box with art materials – card, boxes, plastic lids, used wrapping paper, magazines, tape.
- Use different materials such as clay, play dough, sand, finger paint, watercolours.

Sport

- Act out nursery rhymes and stories.
- Go outside and play together: chasing, ball games, jumping, moving funnily.
- Put the music on and dance together.

Cuddles and chat

- Just cuddle or sit together and chat about any topic.
- Children love to hear stories about themselves.
- Focus on the positive and give confidence to your child.

So put your phone aside and, just for 10-15 minutes, look at your child and focus on your activity together.

Irina Goncherenko and Lili Hristova



Let's talk about breastfeeding

In recent times, it has become quite hard for mothers to nurse their children with breast milk. In the olden days, it was common to see toddlers clinging to the nipples of their mothers for more breast milk despite being fed. Although there are good alternatives to breastfeeding, none compares to breast milk which is the best form of nutrition for babies. It provides the nutrients needed and helps fight infections during babies' growth.

From my personal experience, breastfeeding helped me to recover faster after delivery. There were instances when I would experience a contraction of my womb while breastfeeding. Also, the risk of having breast or ovarian cancer is lessened with breastfeeding.

Exclusive breastfeeding, which is the consumption of breast milk without water or any other solids, has huge benefits. It is primarily done for 6 months. Although it can be challenging, the gains outweigh the pains. After this, the mother begins to introduce other meals. Hence, the weaning process begins the moment semi-solid foods are introduced. The breastfeeding process can culminate in weaning, and it is often a struggle between mother and child. It takes a lot of discipline and energy to completely cut-off breastfeeding to your child. And at times it can be emotional for both. This is because breastfeeding creates a strong bond between mother and child. Some mothers decide to wait until the child stops by him/herself, and others need to stop for a variety of other reasons.

In conclusion, breastfeeding may be challenging and stressful. For instance, you might wonder how a mother of triplets or twins can manage this huge task. It is also important to acknowledge that some women have breast problems: cracked nipples, or low milk supply, coupled with changes in women's lifestyles.

Tip: Breast milk can be extracted using breast pumps. However, the milk should be refrigerated at 4°C or lower and used within 3-4 days.

Tosin Oluwaseun





How to support your child when starting nursery

It's ok to cry, both of you!

Starting nursery is an incredibly big milestone in your child's life. Expect tears from your child and remember it's ok for you to cry too! Try not to cry in front of your child though, as it may make them more anxious.

Good relationships

Your child will be designated a key person (in private nurseries) or (in a school setting) will have a teacher and teaching assistant in the room with them. They will develop a close bond with your child and it's important you do too. Talk to them and tell them about any worries/concerns you have.

Questions!

Remember to ask as many questions as you want, nothing is unimportant. If it's worrying you or if it's just something you want to share with the nursery then go for it.

Communication

Explain to your child what will happen. There are many books out there about starting nursery that may help. The more your child is aware of what is happening the smoother the transition will go. Explaining that they are there to play and have fun and mummy/daddy will come back is very important.

Positivity

However nervous you may be, try not to let your child become aware of that. Make the whole experience as happy and as positive as you can. Your child will be gaining independence and be making lots of new friends! The happier you are the happier they will be!

Michelle Cooney



Helping your child to sleep better

I think most people would agree that one of the hardest parts of parenthood is sleep deprivation. As parents we need to remember that all babies are different and have their own patterns, but given the time and right tools our children can learn to be better sleepers. I suggest monitoring your baby's sleep and then incorporating these methods over a few weeks to observe changes. Better sleep is beneficial for their development and your well-being.

These are my helpful tips to support your child:

Comforts: Your baby may already have an attachment to a small blanket or soft toy or pacifier. These can provide a sense of security so keeping the item close at bedtime is helpful to make them feel comfortable.

Bedtime: Set a goal for bedtime and stick to it. This is a slot in which you decide your baby will be in their cot by. Some babies may have a “sweet spot” where sleep can happen easier and faster. Try to work this out by logging what you've tried and observed. Remember to have a routine that includes a “winding down” phase, such as 'dinner, bath, dressed for bed, read a book.'

Environment: Whether you are room sharing or your baby is in their own room, try to create an environment with few distractions. (a) Keep the room dark; you may consider using a blackout blind. (b) Sound machines can also help with transitioning sleep cycles, so if you use one, keep it playing all night. Preferably low, deep sounds, like rain or white noise.

Safety: Put your child's mattress in the lowest position possible and remove any stimulating/unsafe items from the cot (mobiles, toys, etc.).

Zainab Omokhe

Remember:

Be consistent - have a plan and guide your child through it each night.

Be reassuring - if your child wakes up after being laid down to sleep, pop in at regular intervals to show you're there and give lots of reassuring strokes.

Be committed - your child won't sleep through the night instantly and will have rough nights depending on what they're going through, e.g. teething. Keep going and supporting them. Better sleep is beneficial for their development.

Raising a bilingual child

There are a few ways to develop a child's bilingualism. Bilingualism is knowledge of two or more languages. One of the most popular ways is for each parent to communicate with the child in their mother tongue – “one person, one language”. For example, the mum (and relatives on the mum's side) speaks only German, and the father only English.

Another way is “one environment, one language”. This means that one language is spoken at home with the child, for example German, and outside the home another language, such as English.

It is important to encourage the child to use languages, to have friends or to visit relatives with whom they can communicate. Speak on as many and varied topics as possible – it helps to hear more words in each language. Try not to criticize and don't rush to correct if the child misses out some words or makes grammatical mistakes.

If the child refuses to communicate in one of the languages – for example, the mum speaks German, the child responds in English – don't give up. The child understands what's being said (passive bilingual) and if the mum continues speaking German, the child will understand the German language and will start using it when the time comes.

Bilingualism is a lifelong investment

Antonella Sorace

The stages of learning several languages

First stage – there is a bank of common words from both languages.

Second stage – the child begins to realize that words belong to two different languages.

Third stage – the child starts to learn each language individually.

It is useful for the parents to know the stages to avoid unnecessary stress and fears that the child will not learn any language properly. It is also important to understand that a bilingual child is not the same as a monolingual child and it is natural that the development of both languages might be slightly slower compared with children who communicate in only one language.

Jolanta Jankauskaite



Child-led play and learning from your child

Paying attention to the things your child enjoys doing and supporting them to explore the world through their interests gives your child space to set their own agenda, allowing you both to learn together, about each other and your environment.

At home

If your child shows an interest when you are doing jobs at home, encourage them to be with you. Small children are keen to help and will enjoy being included in what you're doing. Babies like exploring the feel and sound of everyday objects. Older children might help to gather the things needed to do a chore, participating in simple cooking activities, or putting items away once you've finished. See how your child uses familiar objects in unexpected ways and take their lead in imaginative play.

Small children are interested in the things they see other people using. Familiar objects can make great toys. If it's safe, allow your older baby or toddler to explore areas of your home, without redirecting their attention to typical child-oriented activities. They might be interested in the kitchen cupboard where the saucepans are stored, and enjoy getting them out, experimenting with the different sounds they can make with them, and including them in their imaginative play.

Outdoors

Parks are wonderful places for children. Babies will enjoy the sensation of grass, leaves or sand, and if it's safe and the weather is good you can take their socks off so they can enjoy the sensation of different surfaces and textures. Even very small children will be fascinated by the flowers, plants and insects they can find in the park. Encourage them to gently touch the different plants, describe the creatures they see and collect objects such as leaves or pebbles. Parks are also social spaces and they begin to learn about playing together. Taking turns on the equipment at the playground is a good first lesson in sharing, and as children get older and start to play collaboratively, they will develop conflict resolution, imaginative and social skills.

Reading and craft

As your child shows you what excites them, you can use this knowledge to find shared activities they may enjoy. With a trip to the local library or bookshop you can find and share books that explore something your child enjoys. Craft or construction activities relating to their interests will encourage problem-solving and cooperation.

Your child has much to teach you about how they understand the world, and together you can explore and learn from one another.

Niamh Collard





Understanding our children's behaviour

These are some ideas you can use to deal with tantrums or challenging behaviour:

- Console: allow them to roll around and keep them safe.
- Emotional Intelligence: demonstrating control of your own temper helps them learn to control their temper too.
- Set clear limits – Respond immediately when your toddler is aggressive by removing them from the situation and addressing the issue.
- Connect behaviour with consequence: show them that their actions can lead to missing out on the play.
- Avoid excessive screen time: because this will contribute to behavioural problems and their social and emotional development.
- Saying No – be gentle and firm. For their safety and learning, sometimes we need to be able to say 'no'.
- Acknowledge difficult feelings: empathise with what has happened – “It's very upsetting when your ice cream falls out of the cone isn't it?”
- Emotional warmth: cuddle your child frequently. Show your love actively and often. They need to feel safe and secure.
- Routines: consistent routines help a child feel the world is safe and predictable. They know that there is someone there meeting their needs appropriately.
- Give choices – “It's time to put your shoes on. Do you want to do it yourself, or do you want my help?” “You choose a book, and I'll read it to you.”
- Positive words – teaching them how to use your words to communicate what they feel and think.
- Physical activity: think of some options for your child. That might include hitting a pillow, stomping their feet while punching the air, doing an angry dance, or touching their toes. Also teaching them to breathe.
- Never hit a child – consider what you want your child to learn, and find alternative ways to address the challenges you might encounter.

Shaistah Ahmed

Wellbeing for parents using music & drawing

As parents/carers, we all want to do what is best to keep our children safe and healthy. But we can't do that if we don't look after our own physical and mental health and wellbeing. If we always feel like there's not enough time to pay attention to what we need as parents, we start feeling drained, which leads to us being more irritable, stressed, and anxious.

How is music connected to this? Research suggests that music can stimulate the body's natural feel-good chemicals (endorphins, oxytocin). It can help energise our mood and provide an outlet for us to take control of our feelings.

Here is an activity to explore by yourself and share with others. Children can join in if they want. They can draw on your paper, or they can draw on a separate sheet.

- 1 Recall a moment in your life when you **connected** with your child, and felt relaxed and happy.
- 2 Close your eyes or look inward. Bring the moment into your memory and connect with the **feelings** that this moment brought to your body.
- 3 Play some simple **music** that connects you to that feeling, and keep repeating that same piece of music. As the music starts, see how the music can help you express that moment by drawing on a piece of paper. If you like, you can **draw** a circle and keep your drawing within the circle, or you can draw freely without restriction.
- 4 When you have finished your drawing, **discuss** the experience with someone in your household or write about it on a piece of paper. Share or write what the memory was and what the drawing means to you. Connect with the positive memory and drawing when needed.
- 5 Take a moment to bring the experience into your body by **breathing in** and connecting to that positive emotion/feeling.

Matina Karastatira



Mindful parenting



How are you feeling today?

Pay attention to your body and feelings. Scan your body throughout the day from head to toe to check whether you have any tension.

Be curious and just observe!

Put aside your assumptions and look at the facts.
Look at your child and see what you are actually seeing not what you think they are doing.

Keep the balance!

Regulate your activities by switching in and out from high energy activities into quiet ones.

When you choose the activities, remember that everyone is different. For instance, a warm bath can be overstimulating for some children.

Angry Frustrated Annoyed *Disgusted*
Lonely Sad *Hopeless* Depressed
Happy Curious *Peaceful* Proud Joyful
Amazed *Playful* Relieved Content
Scared *Worried* Nervous Surprised
Tired *Confused* Bored Excited

Focus

Fact

Reality

Get active and release energy

Throwing paper balls
Pillow fights | Bean bags
Ripping paper | Trampoline
Knocking over a block tower

Soothe and nurture

Calming music | Candle lights
Walk in nature | Hammock
Hugs | Massage | Warm bath
Body lotion

If you are struggling in your day-to-day life, talk to your doctor, counsellor or a psychotherapist; **check if you need any help** on the NHS website.

<https://www.nhs.uk/mental-health/self-help/guides-tools-and-activities/depression-anxiety-self-assessment-quiz/>



Baby teeth matter

Baby teeth are important for talking, eating and smiling! Children still have some baby teeth up until they are 12 years old. It is important to prevent tooth decay (holes in the teeth) so that children keep their teeth and don't experience any pain. To prevent tooth decay in your child's teeth, follow a few simple rules:

1. **Toothbrushing your baby's teeth should start as soon as the first tooth erupts.**

Use only a smear of fluoride toothpaste to brush the teeth. There is no need to rinse the mouth afterwards as it is better to leave a little toothpaste on the teeth. Once your child is three years old, you can use a pea-sized amount of toothpaste, but not more, and never let children eat the toothpaste as this can cause mottling of the adult teeth. Brush twice per day.

The toothpaste should contain a minimum of 1000 parts per million of fluoride. Fluoride will strengthen your child's teeth and make them less susceptible to tooth decay.

It is better if a grown up does the brushing and then, as your child gets older, help them to do it themselves. Encourage your child to spit out after they have brushed but not to rinse. Don't use a mouthwash for children under 7 years old.

2. **Minimising foods and drinks with sugar** in them especially before bedtime. If your child has some sugary foods it is best to have them at mealtimes. Give only water or milk to drink between meals.

Try to find some fun snacks that your child will eat without sugars, e.g. cheese, fruit, vegetable sticks, bread or breadsticks, toast. You can cut them into fancy shapes to make them more appealing. Keep weaning foods simple and sugar free – be aware that many processed products contain sugar that will damage teeth. Dried fruit, such as raisins, and fruit juice are not a safe snacks for teeth – they cause tooth decay.

3. **Visiting the dentist regularly.** This should start before your child turns one year old, at least every 12 months and sometimes more often. The dentist can tell you when you should come back again.

For more information visit www.kentcht.nhs.uk/service/dental-services/oral-health-promotion-resources/



Physical development: tips

for physically active families

Try to get outside every day - Whatever the weather, go into the garden, the local park or just for a walk. Encourage lots of movement: jumping in puddles, running, chasing games and climbing.

Collecting natural objects - To make going on a walk exciting, take a bag or bucket to collect items such as leaves, twigs, feathers and conkers. Try to find as many different colours and shapes as possible.

Ball games - Use a ball to develop skills such as rolling, stopping, kicking, throwing and catching. A larger ball will be easier to start with.

Acting out a story - Do you have a favourite story? Going on a Bear Hunt or The Gruffalo are very popular. Could you borrow a copy from the library? Can you act out the story? This will encourage lots of movement skills.

Making a map - When you are out on a walk, can you point out important places on the walk? Then, when you are at home, use a large piece of paper and map out the journey you made. Next time take the map you've made with you and be explorers!

Hopscotch - Can you teach your child to play hopscotch? Is there one painted on the ground near you? Could you draw one with chalk? Hopscotch involves lots of jumping and hopping!

Making different body shapes & practising balance - Play a mirror game. Make a shape, maybe a wide star shape. Can your child face you and copy the shape like looking in a mirror? Make a letter, a number or an animal. Hold the shape still to encourage strength and balance.

Choose a favourite piece of music - Encourage lots of movement to music. Children enjoy holding scarves & ribbons whilst dancing. Could you make a small musical instrument, like a small box with some dried rice inside? Seal it up and use it as a shaker. Do you have a pot and a wooden spoon to make a drum?

Essex Cricket

www.essexcricket.org.uk/community/covid-19-home-learning-support/



Top tips for talking

- Talk to your child during your everyday routines, describing what is happening and what they can see.
- Share books with your child – talking about the pictures will help keep them interested even if they don't want to listen to the whole story.
- Use actions and gestures when you speak to help your child listen and understand.
- Limit screen time (phones, tablets, TV) – too much can affect children's ability to listen.
- Play alongside your child, watching what they do and adding in sounds and words e.g. “The car goes vroom.”
- Children learn best when we give them the words they need rather than asking them what things are, e.g. “There's a duck”, rather than “What's that?”
- Show your child choices to help them try words out, e.g. “apple or banana?”
- Sing songs and rhymes together, using actions to help your child join in.
- Praise your child when they try to communicate – they might not get all the sounds and words correct but will thrive with praise as they learn.
- Repeat back what your child says and add an extra word to help them build sentences. E.g. when a child points and says “apple”, respond with “yes, a green apple.”



HENRY is a programme designed for parents of children aged 0-5 and pregnant women who are passionate about giving their babies and young children the best possible start in life.

It supports the whole family to make positive lifestyle changes, creating healthier and happier home environments.

Topics include nutrition, physical activity, emotional well-being and parenting skills and it is facilitated by trained, friendly and supportive practitioners.

To sign up go to **Eat healthier | LBB**D and select “sign up to our free programmes”.
<https://www.lbbd.gov.uk/eat-healthier>



5 minutes of special time

- Spend 5 minutes each day playing with your child.
- The child chooses the toy/activity (not computer or books).
- Use a separate room/corner of a room away from the rest of the family.
- Keep the room as quiet as possible – turn off the radio and TV.
- Mum/dad to give the child their full attention, e.g. when older siblings are at school and younger ones are asleep.
- The play is the important thing, not the talking. Try not to ask questions.
- Get down to your child's level and make sure you are face to face.

Why should I use special time?

- It's the quality of the time spent together that's important, not the quantity, so stick to 5 minutes of special time.
- Special time develops the parent/child relationship.
- Special time gives attention to the child which is not dependent on his/her difficulties with talking.
- Special time provides the parent with a special time that is not dependent on the child's language difficulties.

Try to:

- **Allow** your child to lead you. Before you speak use the OWL approach:
Observe – what your child is doing.
Wait – to see what they say to you.
Listen – to what your child says.
- **Adapt** to share the moment. Join in with your child's activity. Comment on what your child is doing but don't disrupt the flow of the play.
- **Add** language and experience. If your child says “car”, expand the label, e.g. “yes, red car”; or “doggy”, “it's a big doggy”. Extend your child's understanding of the world through play.

Emanuela, NHS Specialist Speech and Language Therapist
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Dance and movement

Dance and movement are great ways to build confidence and self-esteem in children, while also improving well-being and mindfulness. Dance can be enjoyed in various spaces including at home (living room, bedroom or garden – if you have one), or it can be done in the park, community gardens or even in the school playground. Children like stimulation when taking part in dance and movement, such as props, sound or a theme. One of the most popular ones is using a square piece of material such as a scarf: ask the child to run, hop or skip across the space using the material and encouraging them to think about different levels such as 'reaching for the sky' or 'crawling like a caterpillar', all the while holding the material.

Another great way to inspire children to move is to use sounds. These can be hand-made musical instruments (which children love to see and touch too) such as dry beans in a washed out tin, or rubber bands around a plastic cup and the facilitator pulls on the bands. Using the sounds you can ask the children to move to the sounds, and as they gain confidence in this you can experiment a little, by asking them to only move when there is a sound, and reverse that by asking them to be still on the sound.

Lastly, children like a theme. A great way to keep them engaged is to fuse shapes with movements, looking at the basic shapes of maths: triangle, circle, and square. Ask the children to make these shapes with their hands, or get them to lie down or even make the shape with a friend, which encourages partner work and helps befriending skills.

BDYD is a champion grassroots charity which makes positive changes to our community by offering high quality arts based projects, youth dance workshops, community arts events and career pathway activities.

www.bdyd.uk | bdyd@me.com

Create a story with your child

Creative writing is a very useful skill we can all develop. Let's try to create a story with our kids. There are endless possibilities of doing that, but today we will focus on one method.

Step 1

Take a toy box and ask your child to take out 3-5 toys (toy 1, toy 2, toy 3, toy 4 and toy 5).

Step 2

Take some pieces of paper and fold them in half, like a booklet.

Step 3

Ask your child to choose a toy from his pile (toy 1) and give it a name. It will be the main character.

Step 4

Draw or ask your child to draw that character in the booklet you've made.

Step 5

Ask questions and write the plot of a story together.

Where does the character go?

What is the character wearing?

What's the weather like?

What/who does the character meet? (toy 2)

And then... What happens?

Suddenly toy 3 appears...

Step 6

Use toy 4 and toy 5 to interact with toy 1.

Let the child draw the scene in the book or do it yourself.

Some questions that might help:

"How is toy 1 feeling?"

"What does toy 1 like?"

Step 7

Let the child finish the story: "In the end..."



You can play out the story first and then make a book together or do the two things simultaneously. Listen to your child, let the child's imagination lead you. Don't worry if you can't see the logic in the sentences, let the magic happen.

You don't have to write everything or draw professional illustrations; you can use cut-outs from magazines or stencils.

The most important thing: have fun!

Mini Professors

Mini Professors, which is one of the sessions delivered at Babyzone, is a wonderful science programme, inspiring a new generation through interactive classes. Children have a thirst for knowledge and can understand scientific principles explained in simple terms with fun experiments in which they can touch, see and hear to help them understand. Here's one you might try at home!

Freezing and melting things in ice

Encourage discussion on temperatures with your child and invite them to be a part of the freezing process. Go around the garden and collect leaves, petals or even their favourite toys and place them in a container. A simple tupperware one is perfect!

Ask them to fill the container with water. Pouring from a jug develops hand eye coordination and builds muscle, vital skills needed for academic subjects like reading and also gross motor skills for balance and sports.

Encourage new vocabulary like full, empty, hot, cold and freezing. Or why not fill a variety of containers and talk about 'the biggest', 'heavier than' and 'the lightest', linking to maths they will do in that first year at school.

Once it's in the freezer they can check it (not too often though or it will never freeze) and describe how it feels.

Getting the items out is great fun, you can leave your items to melt and watch the puddle evaporate or your can try and break them out.



Babyzone is a universal, **free** to attend offer for babies and toddlers. It runs at **Future Youth Zone every Wednesday (9.30am-2.30pm**, during term time) and offers a warm, safe and inviting space for parents and carers to bring their babies and toddlers. There are two exploratory, free play areas (one for babies and one for toddlers) and there is also a programme of five brilliant, fun-filled classes for children and parents including Baby Sensory, Toddler Sense, Mini Professors, Reading Fairy and Parent First Aid. There is no charge for any element, no schedule, no need to sign up or sign in and everyone is welcome. No booking required.

Future Youth Zone, 201-225
Porters Avenue, Dagenham
Essex, RM9 5YX
babyzonebarking@gmail.com
020 3941 6722



Strategies to emotionally and physically regulate a child

Practical strategies which parents/carers can use to prevent behavioural outbursts, meltdowns, social anxiety and manage triggers are:

- Prepare your child for any transitions
- Keep the lines of communication open
- Provide fidget toys to distract from external triggers
- Use calming music where appropriate and on long journeys
- Provide deep pressure massage to hands and feet
- Predictability is key

Any strategy which is provided to parents/carers will be carefully explained in detail. Our aim is to educate and upskill all parents/carers to implement the strategies with confidence in a controlled and safe manner.

How can parents support their own mental health and well-being when raising a special needs child? Remember, your well-being matters!!!

It is very difficult to prioritise your own well-being when raising a child with special or additional needs. But if you're not in control of your own physical and mental health, this can potentially affect how you support your child. Ensure you listen to your body, provide it with what it needs (healthy nutrition, hydration, exercise and adequate sleep).

Here are some tips you can use to ensure you are keeping your well-being in check:

- Locate community groups
- Incorporate physical exercise into your weekly routine
- Manage mental exhaustion by knowing your limits
- Seek professional help when needed
- Respite care. Take a break!

The Sensory Hive is an innovative community-based service, based within The Hive Community Centre, which delivers bespoke interventions that are inspired by special needs requirements, well-being, health and occupational therapy concepts.
thehive@barkingmosque.org.uk | 0208 478 8526



It's good to talk

Having a child can be one of the most exciting and joyous occasions in life, but it's also a life changing event which involves adjusting to huge changes socially, personally, psychologically, and physically. Parents commonly express feeling guilty and ashamed if they are struggling with stress, worries or low mood and this can sometimes impact on relationships with significant others.

There are some self-care steps that can help during experiences of stress and low mood:

1) Be kind to yourself

You might have many expectations of yourself as a parent, but no one can meet these expectations all the time. When people are low, they often focus on the negatives rather than the positives. Instead try to focus on what is going well and what you are doing right.

2) Keep a mood diary

This can help you track when you are experiencing different emotions and when they are more likely to happen during the day. Perhaps there are situations where your mood declines more than others.

3) Keep a routine

Becoming a new parent can impact your routine and consequently affect your mood. Try to introduce routine throughout your day and take part in activities that bring you happiness.

4) Speak to people with similar experiences

It's easy for people to feel alone when having mental health difficulties. However, there will be many people who have similar experiences and will be able to relate to the way you are feeling. Why not try joining a local parenting group?

5) Ask for help

Seeking emotional support from others such as friends, family and your GP can be vital in helping you cope with your mental health. Asking for support doesn't mean you are a bad parent or unable to cope with your child, rather it's a brave step towards recovery.

Barking & Dagenham Talking Therapies offers free and confidential mental health support for people who are experiencing low mood, anxiety, stress, and depression. Support is offered through 1-1 therapy sessions or in groups.

For further information or to self-refer, please call 0300 300 1554 (opt.3), or visit www.talkingtherapies.nelft.nhs.uk/barking-and-dagenham

Let's practise gratitude

With everything happening in the past 2 years, the rollercoaster the world is going through has affected many of our homes. Parents have many worries and questions, which often leads to a crisis of anxiety, depression, low moods and lack of energy, it's understandable!

Suddenly it seems 5x harder to be present with our children, you may find yourself overwhelmed and burn out quicker. Our children are resilient and their way of expressing emotions is different. Our children usually pick up on the parents/carer energy and that often affects their behaviour 10x more.

Now our tips here are:

- To look within, don't let the chaos around us consume your energy.
- We can't pour from a empty cup, practise gratitude daily for that is the best attitude.
- Practise fitness, engage with your community groups, take 2 or 5 minutes to just breaaathe!!

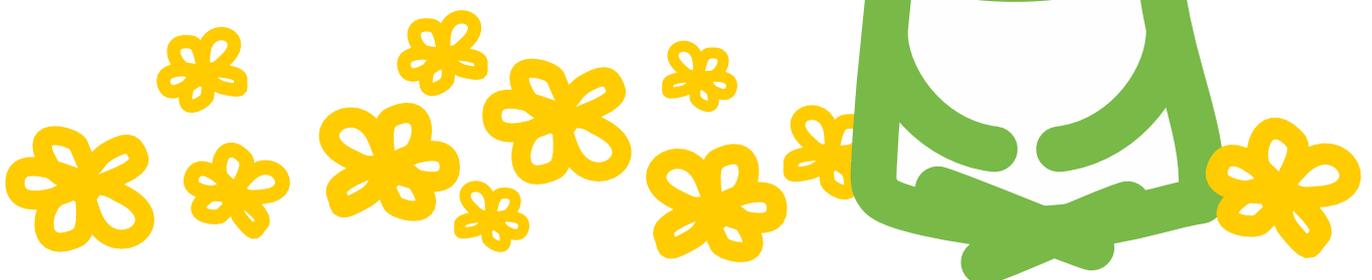
We can support you through our activities and services. **To find out more**, stay connected via info@mumsonamission.co.uk | Instagram: @mumsonamission_ | Twitter: @momsmission_ | whatsapp 07368559441

Vanessa Raimundo, Founder/Director
www.mumsonamission.co.uk | T. 020 34888655

Check out this article by Citizens UK about the work MOMs are doing in our community: <https://tinyurl.com/4paudmyd>

Support the work of MOMs by making a donation to our GoFundMe page:
<https://tinyurl.com/hv7dyf3f>

(breathe)



Cocoon

empowering our children



Early Years Cocoon C.I.C. is a company that was founded with the aim of benefiting the community and in particular families with young children.

Our objectives are: to develop supportive services for families with young children; to promote positive parenting by focusing on the learning and development of the child; to strengthen social, communication and artistic skills in young children and their parents; to share creative and educational practice to ensure the well-being of children through a supportive family; and to create multidisciplinary stimuli for children by engaging with other local community organisations and individuals.

earlyyearscocoon@gmail.com | Instagram: @earlyyearscocoon

www.earlyyearscocoon.co.uk

